

THE RELATIONS OF THE ACADEMY TO THE PUBLIC AND TO THE PROFESSION*

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A conventional Annual Report is not customary at this time. Yet some analysis of present problems seems pertinent. Two features especially warrant brief comment—namely, the relationship of the Academy to the Community and the relationship of the Academy to organized medicine.

The average layman knows the Academy only as a name. That the Academy has its finger on the pulse of many important interests of our community life is known to few. It is generally thought of as a meeting place of doctors, perhaps as a beehive of activity; but what those activities are, or whether they touch even remotely the life of the individual or of the City is not common knowledge.

It is appropriate, however, that the public be informed as to the part which the Academy takes in the life of the community, and that the citizen should appreciate that the Academy is constantly making considerable contributions towards his welfare.

Certain of the Foundations have given generously to make possible the erection of the original building which we now occupy and to provide an endowment to support certain of our activities. The generosity of a single individual, matched by the contributions of many of our Fellows and friends (made at a time when the resources of many were sorely depleted) enabled us to build the much needed addition and the Library Extension. Our ability to meet expenses with a relatively small deficit is dependent upon annual gifts by four anonymous donors amounting to \$20,000. These generous individuals recognize the value of the work, but the public as a whole has never participated. Certainly, there would be a much larger number of benefactors, if the work and the needs of the Academy were more generally recognized.

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It must be emphasized, however, that the medical profession bears the major part of the burden. The members of the Academy contribute in dues and initiation fees over \$75,000 a year, in addition to a considerable amount in legacies and gifts.

We can refer only briefly to the constructive efforts and accomplishments of the past year.

Among the high spots of our work during 1935 may be mentioned the following contributions by the Committee on Public Health Relations.

A study of the medical procedures in connection with the Women's Court was undertaken at the request of one of the Magistrates and was presented to a committee appointed by the Mayor to deal with this subject.

As a corollary to this study was that dealing with the control of venereal diseases. In this report was outlined a plan of organization and criteria for the determination of potential infectiousness were formulated for the guidance of the Health Department. Commissioners Parran and Rice heartily endorsed the report.

At the request of the Justices of the Court on Domestic Relations a study was made of the medical factors entering into the work of the Court. A comprehensive study was submitted to the Court and we were assured that it will be of great value in guiding its policies.

Anticipating the requests for views of the Academy with regard to the structure of our City Government in the domain of health and hospital services the Public Health Relations Committee prepared four documents dealing respectively with the organization of the Department of Health, the Department of Hospitals, domiciliary care, and medical services for the prevention and control of illness among City employees. These documents constitute the basis of discussion of the Charter Revision Commission with regard to these problems.

The extensive certification by school medical inspectors for tonsil and adenoid operations has created an over-

whelming demand for facilities in municipal hospitals. At the request of the Commissioner of Hospitals a study of the situation was made with the recommendation that no children be referred without an adequate history indicating the grounds for the recommended operation.

At the request of the Health Department the Committee studied the need and desirability of a convalescent serum center in the City and advised in favor of it.

As in former years the Committee made detailed studies of the City Budget in so far as it relates to the departments in which the Academy is interested.

An inquiry was made into the possibility of protecting hospitals against non-sterile surgical catgut.

Among other things the Committee considered the need for a modern hospital for chronic diseases; research in the Department of Hospitals; the question of the control of potentially harmful drugs and cosmetics; health centers; industrial hygiene; the value of continuing Grade A milk; and morbidity statistics.

During the past year, the Medical Information Bureau received and handled a total of 4,056 inquiries. This is an increase of 29 per cent, or 906 inquiries, over the year 1934.

Eight hundred and thirty-seven inquiries (approximately 21 per cent of the total) were received from the press. Practically every newspaper in Greater New York has made use of the Bureau as a source of medical information, for review of medical news items received by them from other sources, for feature material and for advice on advertisements of a medical nature.

In addition the Bureau was frequently called on to block the spread of false and misleading medical news. In this direction, the Bureau issued "corrective" releases, or statements, on several cancer cures, a specific tuberculosis remedy, misinformation on the thyroid, paternity tests, corneal transplantation and infantile paralysis sera and vaccines.

Three hundred and thirteen daily health columns were issued to the Associated Press. These were published in approximately four hundred newspapers throughout the country.

Forty-four medical releases were issued on important medical subjects.

The Bureau assisted a number of public health organizations in promoting their educational activities. Notable among these were: The National Tuberculosis Association, The American Nurses Association, American Public Health Association, American Society for the Control of Cancer and the New York Social Work Publicity Council.

It scheduled and arranged for the delivery of four hundred and six radio addresses, which were given over the major stations in New York City.

The Fellows of the Academy deliver weekly radio addresses on timely medical subjects which reach practically every part of the country.

A series of lectures has been organized, specifically addressed to the lay public. These Lectures to the Laity on the Art and Romance of Medicine are noteworthy in the fact that they do not deal with disease, disease prevention, or even hygiene, but are devoted to the art and romance of medicine, how medicine achieved its goals and how it is striving for those still unattained.

It must be clearly understood that many of the activities of the Medical Information Bureau have been cooperative efforts with other organizations.

Such then is an outline of the Academy's efforts on behalf of the public.

Let me remind you of Ruskin's statement: "We are glad enough, indeed, to make our profit of science; we snap up anything in the way of a scientific bone that has meat on it eagerly enough: but if the scientific man comes for a bone or a crust to us that is another story. What have we publicly done for science?"

There have been other educational activities pertaining to the profession which, however, have been of value indirectly to the Community in that they tend to make better doctors and therefore improve the care of the sick and add to the knowledge of disease. They comprise: The Annual Graduate Fortnight with an enrollment of over 600 physicians. Each year there is selected a subject of outstanding importance in the practice of medicine and surgery. The subject in its various aspects is presented in evening lectures, coordinated hospital clinics and in an exhibit.

A series of Afternoon Lectures, with an average attendance of over 200 presenting the recent advances in medicine which are of special interest to the practitioner.

The Bureau of Clinical Information, where detailed information is available regarding post-graduate medical study in the United States and foreign countries. The Bureau publishes a daily Bulletin which announces the meetings, lectures, clinical conferences, hospital rounds and other medical activities of the day. It also publishes a daily Surgical Bulletin announcing the programs of operative work in the hospitals of the City.

In addition to organizing and carrying out the above activities the Committee on Medical Education selects the two Alexander Cochran Bowen Scholars, who are given a year of post-graduate medical study abroad.

The Academy not only publishes the Bulletin which reaches the members and the medical libraries of the world, but also a monthly journal, the Health Examiner, which is sent to every registered doctor in the City. Some 13,000 medical men are thus provided gratuitously each month with information as to preventive medicine.

At the beginning of the year the State Legislature passed a bill which revolutionized the Workmen's Compensation Laws. This bill was the result of recommendations made by a joint committee of the Academy and the State Society. The Committee was appointed by the Governor of the State. The bill was planned primarily in the interests of

and for the protection of the injured employee; and to correct the many abuses which the employee and every interested party suffered under the then existing law. In operation the law as enacted gives promise of meeting the indications.

In recording the needs, I must call attention to the fact that the Academy is managed most efficiently and economically. The expenses of every department have been pared down to the lowest statum.

But every department and subdivision needs support not only for expansion but in order to stem an ebb tide in their activities.

Maintenance must be more generously met to prevent deterioration of the plant. The major part of the work is accomplished through Committees on which are enrolled 213 of the Fellows. Attention has been called to the work of those committees which have to do with questions affecting the public and the profession. These activities are made possible by reason of the fact that the Academy has a large staff of expert and trained investigators and clerks. The ever-increasing demands upon the Academy can be met only by an increase in the Staff. Moreover, we must soon face the problem of more equable remuneration for services. In general, the salaries are still on the reduced scale which the period of depression made mandatory.

The Library must have money and much more money to keep it efficient.

The budget for books this year was \$4,665, including \$610 for rare books, whereas a few years ago the budget for books was \$9,500. While in the past we bought about two-thirds of the new books, in recent years we have purchased only one-third. We have been woefully falling behind, and obviously it will be difficult to make up the deficiency.

In more prosperous times, \$2,000 was set aside for the completion of files of magazines. For the last year or so there has been only \$200 for this purpose.

Attention may be called to the fact that the Library is the second largest medical collection in the country. Its use is primarily for the advancement of scientific medicine. The practitioner and specialist must have it to keep abreast of the times; but far more important is the fact that it is a necessary instrument of practically every research worker in the city, and by many at distant points in the United States as well as a considerable number in other countries. In 1934, the attendance was 51,793. In 1935 it was larger. On one day in October, 260 readers used the Library. I am not urging its support as a matter of civic pride but as a necessary and material attribute for the welfare of the present and the betterment of conditions in the future.

An important event of the year was the arrival of finished copies, beautifully bound, of the *Andreae Vesalii Incones Anatomicae* for which the actual wood-blocks, made for the editions of the *De Fabrica*, 1543 and 1555, have been used again by the Bremer Presse of Munich. In addition to these wood-blocks after drawings of Van Calcar, the Latin text, descriptive of the illustrations, has been reprinted. The books are sold by subscription; the proceeds going to the Library Publication Fund through which other publications of a historical nature will be undertaken. The gratitude of the members of the Academy and of all book-lovers is due Dr. Lambert and the Librarian for the completion of this monumental work.

In regard to the Academy's relations with organized medicine I must remind you that a house divided against itself cannot stand. The medical profession must hold together or lose immeasurably. I do not refer to financial emoluments, but to its dignity, its traditional privileges and rights. If the profession is squabbling and interesting itself in petty politics and trivial or imaginary grievances it may expect to be attacked and successfully attacked by individuals, groups and legislatures.

It must be recognized that while we of the profession may wear different coats, have different creeds and varied connections, our motives are one, our ideals are basically

the same, except in the case of a minority of habitual fault finders and selfish individualists.

Mutual confidence and the conviction that the other fellow is not less well motivated than ourselves is of fundamental importance. In general I feel that this attitude prevails, and while we have not reached the millennium and must expect controversies and disagreements these should be approached by all in a broad minded compromising spirit.

A Committee has been organized this year for the purpose of informing ourselves on matters of general interest to the profession. Especially those pertaining to trends in medical practice. A further purpose is for it to act as a liaison between the Academy and organized medicine. It is not intended that it take an aggressive part but merely consider problems as they arise.

The Academy is not directly interested in politics, yet it is ready to assist in emergencies which threaten to affect the profession and its relations to the public. However, it will not initiate action. By reason of its stable and permanent form of organization and a somewhat academic and certainly a conservative attitude, it is frequently called upon to aid the civic and State authorities in solving problems of interest to public health, public education and other non-political questions. Such opportunities it welcomes. It is, however, always disposed to cooperate with organized medicine and looks for reciprocity. Obviously a sharp line of demarcation cannot be drawn between the fields in which the two organizations should function, and the doubtful no man's land or everybody's land should not cause friction.

On its various committees are always a quota of acknowledged representatives of organized medicine. The intention is always to have and to allow mutual knowledge of what is going on, also advice as to what action should be taken on every question. If one side seems to over step its mark let us not take it as an affront and cause for friction, but rather look at the bigger problems, the main one being a united harmonious front on the part of all factions.